PRESS RELEASE

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*Dawn in the Western Mountains, 1961, colour lithograph, paper, 400 x 520 mm,*

*The Gallery of Modern Art in Hradec Králové*

## The Dawn of Zdeněk Sklenář - PRINTS 1934–1985

**June 23 – September 24, 2017**

The Gallery of Modern Art in Hradec Králové, Velké náměstí 139–140, Hradec Králové, CZ

**The Gallery of Modern Art in Hradec Králové and Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář introduce the exhibition *The Dawn of* *Zdeněk Sklenář*, featuring a selection of the artist’s prints from 1934–1985. Unique, little known works will be displayed alongside the frequently shown print series. Of particular interest is Sklenář’s sculptural portrait of the poet Apollinaire. The exhibition, accompanied by the publication of the first part of a comprehensive monograph, will be introduced in the Prince Gong Mansion in Beijing next autumn.**

The representative selection from **Zdeněk Sklenář**’s (1910–1986) printmaking work   
at The Gallery of Modern Art in Hradec Králové includes over 60 pieces from a total   
of 110 prints made by the artist, one of the most prominent figures of 20th century Czech art, painter, printmaker and illustrator. The curatorial concept of exhibition curator Tomáš Rybička together with gallerist Zdeněk Sklenář includes a comprehensive selection of the printmaking work that Zdenek Sklenář developed systematically alongside his painting.

The exhibition at The Gallery of Modern in Art, Hradec Králové, uses thematic groups   
to acquaint the audience with **iconic print series**, known mainly from book illustrations,   
and also with prints marked by the **war and post-war** periods and Sklenář’s inspiration   
by the atmosphere of Paris. In one of the series the exhibition curators have included portraits inspired by the figure and personality of the painter **Arcimboldo**; it was Sklenář who turned   
the attention of art theorists to the works of mannerists at the court of Rudolf II – Jiří Kolář wrote on him: “*He marvels where others turn up their nose*.”

“*The exhibited works are not organised in strict chronology, as it would be customary in retrospective work overviews, but they are integrated in thematic units, because Zdeněk Sklenář repeatedly revisited some subjects, such as the portrait of the mannerist painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo*,” says Tomáš Rybička, exhibition curator.

A major part of the exhibition is devoted to **Chinese inspiration** – Zdeněk Sklenář visited China in 1955 and spent three months there, during which he became acquainted with Eastern culture, philosophy and the spiritual legacy of China. His personal experience of the cultural, artistic   
and spiritual legacy of this ancient culture became of key importance for Sklenář’s further artistic work. Examples of the artist’s life-long passion can be admired in the prints illustrating   
one of the most famous Chinese novels, *Journey to the West* by Wu Cheng’en, known in Czech translation as *Opičí král* (*The Monkey King*, 1961), or the most extensive anthology of Chinese poetry *Zpěvy Staré Číny* (*Songs of Ancient China*, 1967).

The audience will also have an opportunity to see prints inspired by Chinese calligraphy   
and characters, and by traditional Chinese architecture and nature. Due to Sklenář’s contribution to interconnecting the Western and Eastern cultures, many personalities in culture and art consider him to be an important bridge between the East and West. Peter Weibel, an Austrian Professor and art historian, even calls him the one “(...) *who harmonizes world cultures*.”

“*Zdeněk Sklenář succeeded in handling and enhancing his Chinese experience in his work in a creative   
and brilliant way. It is mainly in his Chinese illustrations that we find many Chinese formal elements, shapes, symbols, motifs and stylizations, but the style and technique of handling these forms are typical of Sklenář, not Chinese. It is most important, however, that Zdeněk Sklenář as a modern artist created a very modern   
body of work by interconnecting the elements of both traditions in a brilliant manner*,” says Fan Dian, Director of the **National Art Museum of China** (NAMOC).

**Lesser-known works** from the beginnings of Sklenář's printmaking work, dating back   
to the mid-1930s and 1940s, often made in only **a few prints**, will be shown alongside   
the frequently displayed prints. Among these is for example one of the **first** artist’s prints   
from 1934. The exhibition designer Jiří Příhoda, contemporary artist and architect, has further included original prints from two bibliophile books *Pocta Arcimboldovi* (*Tribute to Arcimboldo*, 1969) and *Drak z černé tůně* (*Dragon from the Black Pool*, 1958).

An undoubtedly **interesting moment in the exhibition** is the presentation of a **sculpture**   
– a portrait of the French poet Guillaume **Apollinaire**, which Sklenář, dedicating himself mainly to printmaking, painting and illustration, made in response to his rich inspiration from French poetry. There are no other examples of sculpture in Sklenář’s work.

Sklenář made a total of 110 prints. The exhibition in Hradec Králové features 60 prints, 4 matrices and 1 sculpture, and also the original styluses used by Zdeněk Sklenář. Most of the exhibits   
have been loaned by Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář, several works come from the collection   
of The Gallery of Modern Art in Hradec Králové. An important part of the exhibition consists of loans from private collections, such as SVETLIK ART FOUNDATION and the collection of Gerda and Josef Freisinger.

The work of Zdeněk Sklenář is further represented in important national institutions   
in the Czech Republic, but also for instance in the British Museum, London.

The exhibition *The Dawn of Zdeněk Sklenář* is accompanied by the first part of the long-awaited **extensive monograph Zdeněk Sklenář / 1 – Prints 1934–1985**, mapping the artist’s printmaking work. The publication was edited by gallerist Zdeněk Sklenář, nephew   
of Zdeněk Sklenář, and Ivo Binder; the graphic design is the work of Prof. Zdeněk Ziegler.

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Open from Tuesday to Sunday, **10 am to 6 pm.**

**Entry fee: 60 CZK / concessions 30 CZK, the ticket is also valid for the exhibitions: *Zorka Ságlová – A Retrospective* and *Metamorphoses of Painting / Paintings of Metamorphoses***

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